

How to Conduct a Writing CBM

Overview

A Writing CBM is a short, simple measure of a student's writing skills. When administered a Writing CBM, students are required to write for 3 minutes on an instructional-level story starter. Students' writing is then scored on specific writing skills, including Total Words Written (TWW), Words Spelled Correctly (WSC), and Correct Writing Sequences (CWS).

Before Testing

- Select a grade-appropriate story starter
- Review administration procedures and scoring directions
- Distribute paper (lined) and pencils for students' responses
- Get a countdown timer/stopwatch
- Ensure a quiet testing environment

During Testing

Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) are standardized. They must be administered the same way every time by all examiners.

- Follow directions exactly as they are written.
- If the Writing CBM is administered in groups (large or small), the examiner must monitor students' performance; during the 3-minute testing period, if a student stops writing for 10 seconds, the examiner should point to their paper and say, "Keep writing the best story you can."
- Examiners are not allowed to answer any questions or provide any prompting that may impede with the student's independent performance (errors in spelling, grammar, miswritten words, etc.).

After Testing

- Score the writing sample as soon as possible after testing
- Determine the **Total Words Written, TWW**, by underlining the words the students wrote and finding the sum of the number of underlines.
- If necessary, determine the **Correct Writing Sequences, CWS**, to determine how many of their words are mechanically, semantically, or syntactically correct. Caret marks (^) are used to mark pairs of words that are mechanically, semantically, and syntactically correct.
- If necessary, determine the **Words Spelled Correctly, WSC**, by subtracting the number of spelling errors from the TWW.

Standardized Directions for Administering a Written Expression Curriculum-Based Measurement

1. Select a grade-appropriate story starter.
2. Distribute pencils and lined paper.
3. Say: **You are going to write a story. I will read a sentence, and then you will write a story about what happens. You will have one minute to think about what you will write, and three minutes to write your story. Remember to do your best work. If you don't know how to spell a word, you should guess. Are there any questions? (Pause). Put your pencils down and listen. *For the next minute, think about...* (insert story starter).**
4. Begin your stopwatch and allow exactly 1 minute for students to "think." (Make sure that students do not begin writing during this time)
5. After 30 seconds, say: ***"You should be thinking about..."* (insert story starter).**
6. After 1 minute of "think time," say: ***"Now being writing."*** Restart your stop watch for 3 minutes.
7. Monitor students and encourage them to write if they are not writing by saying, ***"Keep writing the best story you can."***
8. After 90 seconds, say: ***"You should be writing about..."* (insert story starter).**
9. At the end of the 3-minute period, say: ***"Stop. Put your pencils down. Thank you."***
10. If students would like to finish their story, they can do so as long as they complete it on a separate sheet of paper.

Determining the Total Words Written (TWW)

Underline any words that are produced in the writing sample (even if the word is misspelled or is a nonsense word). Find the sum of the total number of words. See rules below.

- Hyphenated words that *can* stand alone: Each morpheme that is separated by a hyphen should be counted as a word if it can stand alone (mother-in-law = 3 words).
- Hyphenated words that *cannot* stand alone: If one or more of the morphemes in a hyphenated sequence cannot stand alone, then the entire sequence is counted as one word (re-evaluation = 2 words).
- Abbreviations: Commonly used abbreviations (Mr., Mrs., T.V.) should be counted as words.
- Story Titles and Endings: Words that are written in the title or as an ending should be counted in the TWW.
- Numbers that are not spelled out (3, 10, 100) or symbols (% , & , \$, #) should not be counted as words.

Determining the Words Spelled Correctly (WSC)

WSC refers to the number of correctly spelled words in the writing sample, regardless of the context in which they are used. Words should be counted as WSC if they can be found in the English language. Incorrectly spelled words should be circled. WSC is calculated by subtracting the total number of errors (circled words) from the Total Words Written (TWW).

- Abbreviations must be spelled correctly.
- Each morpheme counted individually in a hyphenated word must be spelled correctly; if the morpheme cannot stand alone (i.e., prefix) and part of the word is spelled incorrectly, the entire word should be counted as an incorrect spelling.
- Titles and endings should be counted in the WSC
- Capitalization rules: Proper nouns must be capitalized unless the name is also a common noun. Capitalization of the first word in the sentence is not required for the word to be spelled correctly. Words are counted as spelled correctly even if they are capitalized incorrectly in the sentence.
- Reversal of letters: Words containing letter reversals are not counted as errors unless the reversal causes the word to be spelled incorrectly (p, q, g, d, b, n, u).
- Contractions are counted as WSC as long as the apostrophe is in the correct place (if the word can stand alone without the apostrophe, the apostrophe does not have to be in the correct place)

Determining the Correct Writing Sequence (CSW)

A Correct Writing Sequence (CSW) is a pair of adjacent, correctly spelled words that are acceptable within the context of the written phrase to a native English speaker. CWS takes into account punctuation, syntax, semantics, spelling, and capitalization. When scoring CSW, a caret (^) is used to mark each correct word sequence. A space is implied at the beginning of a sentence.

- Place a caret (^) between words that are (1) mechanically (spelled correctly, appropriate capitalization), (2) semantically, and (3) syntactically correct; sum the number of carets.
^The^dog^is^big.^ CWS=5
- There is an implied space at the beginning of the first sentence:
^All^of^the^dogs^started^to^run.^ CWS=8
^All^of^the^dogs_stratted_to^run.^ CWS=6
- Words must be capitalized and punctuated correctly with the exception of commas; correct punctuation must be present at the end of the sentence; the first word of the next sentence must be capitalized and be spelled correctly in order to be counted as a CWS:

- ^The^flower^is^red.^ ^It^is^pretty.^ CWS=9
 - ^The^flower^is^red.^ it is^pretty CWS=6
- Words must be syntactically correct; sentences that begin with conjunctions are considered syntactically correct:
 - ^I^had^never^seen^that^movie^before.^ CWS=8
 - ^I^never_seen^that^movie^never.^ CWS=6
 - ^And^then^the^girl^gave^the^dog^some^food.^ CWS=10
- Words must be semantically correct:
 - ^John^went^to^the^zoo.^ CWS=6
 - ^John^went_too_the^zoo.^ CWS=4
 - ^My^mom^bought^candy^especially^for^me.^ CWS=8
 - ^My^mom^bounht^candy_specially_for^me.^ CWS=6
- Contractions: apostrophes are required if the word cannot stand alone without it:
 - ^I^went^to^Beth's^party.^ CWS=6
 - ^I^went^to_Beths_party.^ CWS=4
- Words with reversed letters are included in the CWS unless the reversed letter causes a word to be spelled incorrectly:
 - ^There^was^a^bad^thunderstorm.^ CWS=6
 - ^There^was^a^dad^thunderstorm.^ CWS=6
 - ^The^dolphin^swam^through^the^water.^ CWS=7
 - ^The_bolphin_swam^through^the^water.^ CWS=5
- Words written in story titles or endings that are capitalized and spelled correctly are included in the total CWS:
 - ^The^Big^Dog^ CWS=4
 - the Big^Dog^ CWS=2
 - the big dog CWS=0
 - ^The^End.^ CWS=3
 - ^The end.^ CWS=2
- Commonly used abbreviations that are spelled correctly are included in the total CWS count:
 - ^She^lives^on^Grant^St.^ CWS=6
- Hyphenated words are counted in the CWS as long as each morpheme (separated by a hyphen) is spelled correctly:
 - ^My^brother-in-law^graduated^from^school.^ CWS=6
 - ^My brudder-in-law graduated^from^school.^ CWS=4
- Numbers that are not spelled out are not included in the CWS, **except for dates**:
 - 5 dogs^barked.^ CWS=2
 - ^Five^dogs^barked.^ CWS=4
 - ^Today^is^July^7, ^2009.^ CWS=6
- Symbols used in writing that are not spelled out are not counted in the total CWS:
 - ^I^won^a^fish & a^cake @ the^carnival.^ CWS=7